



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Public Safety Standards and Training

4190 Aumsville Hwy SE

Salem, OR 97317-8983

503-378-2100

<http://www.dpsst.state.or.us>

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TO: Senate Workforce Committee
Michael Dembrow, Chair
Kim Thatcher, Vice-Chair
Sara Gelser
Tim Knopp
Diane Rosenbaum

FROM: Linsay Hale, Professional Standards Division Director

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 496

Background: The Public Safety Memorial Fund (PSMF) was established in 1999 to provide immediate, temporary financial assistance to the families of public safety officers¹ who suffer a qualifying death or to officers suffering a permanent, total disability in the line of duty.

Current benefits may include:

- A one-time, lump sum payment of \$25,000;
- 12 months of mortgage payments on the residence of the public safety officer;
- Reimbursement for health and dental coverage for all eligible beneficiaries; and
- Undergraduate and graduate level scholarships for all eligible beneficiaries.

Since its inception, the PSMF has assisted the families of more than 40 public safety officers and has awarded nearly \$2 million dollars to eligible beneficiaries. In the current biennium, the PSMF has assisted the families of nine officers tragically killed in the line of duty, paying out \$143,733. Benefit costs per eligible beneficiary start at no less than \$25,000 with on-going benefit costs potentially exceeding \$250,000, depending upon the number and age of eligible dependents.

Effect of SB 496 on the PSMF: Currently, an officer qualifies for PSMF consideration if his or her death or permanent, total disability is the direct or proximate result of an enforcement action, emergency response, or public safety training for an enforcement action or emergency response that an officer is authorized and obligated to perform, or if the death or permanent, total disability is the result of an act committed against a public safety officer because of their position as a public safety officer.

¹ For the purposes of PSMF eligibility, "public safety officer" includes corrections officers, career and volunteer fire service professionals, parole and probation officers, police officers, reserve officers, and youth corrections officers.

SB 496 seeks to expand the definition of a qualifying death or disability to include public safety officers who suffer an injury or occupational disease compensable under Oregon's Workers' Compensation laws or comparable programs in larger cities.

The Workers' Compensation definitions found in ORS 656.005 and 656.802 define "compensable injury" and "occupational disease" in a manner that includes preexisting diseases or conditions and mental disorders resulting from employment that ultimately result in death or permanent, total disability. These definitions have the potential to presumptively include not only cancers, but stress-related diseases, heart conditions and off-the-job injuries for the purposes of determining PSMF eligibility.

Though it is impossible to predict how many more applications for PSMF benefits would be made with the passage of this legislation, preliminary research indicates that the number of eligible beneficiaries would increase substantially. It is presumed that the PSMF as currently funded would be unable to sustain this increased demand.

Effect of SB 496 on the DPSST: The PSMF is administered and staffed by the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST), in conjunction with the six-member PSMF Board. Administrative duties include providing education about the fund, processing new and supplemental PSMF applications, and preparing for and facilitating PSMF Board meetings. The administration of the PSMF currently accounts for less than 1% of one full-time employee's duties. Time and materials spent administering the PSMF are charged back to the PSMF.

Currently staff processes an average of 10 PSMF applications a year, including supplemental applications for continuing benefits made by eligible beneficiaries. DPSST estimates an additional full-time employee would be required should this legislation be passed as written. Due to the complexity of Workers' Compensation claims, DPSST would require a position qualified to review medical and vocational health claims and is capable of assisting the PSMF Board in evaluating applications appropriately.
